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# COTTON

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## The Mill Man's Point of View

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By

D. A. TOMPKINS

CHARLOTTE, N. C.

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## Cotton---The Mill Man's Point of View.

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*Address before National Cotton Convention, held at Shreveport, La., Dec. 12-15, 1904, by D. A. Tompkins, Charlotte, North Carolina.*

The Twentieth century in its beginning holds out unusual fair promise to the people of the cotton-growing states of America. I have often pointed out how the cotton planter and cotton farmer has been compelled since the civil war to double the production of cotton each decade, and yet not receive any increased money for the increased crop. Speaking roughly, and in round numbers, and in average figures, the production and the gross income from cotton since the civil war has been as follows:

First decade,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million bales at 24 cents a pound, equal \$300,000,000.

Second decade, 5 million bales at 12 cents a pound, equal \$300,000,000.

Third decade 10 million bales at 6 cents a pound, equal \$300,000,000.

Fourth decade, 10 million bales at 10 cents a pound, equal \$500,000,000.

Last year the price possibly brought the average to 12 cents a pound for the last decade, which brought a gross income of just about double what the Southern cotton planter and farmer has heretofore worked for. Formerly there were produced in each succeeding decade 100 per cent. more cotton and the price was cut in half. From the third to the fourth decade there was no increase, the quantity remaining about 10 million bales, but the price practically doubled. This situation would seem to be an ideal one for the Southern farmer, yet it is not without its menaces and dangers at the present time. Among these I enumerate:

- (1) The boll weevil;
- (2) The determination of the spinners of Europe to foster and develop the production of cotton in other parts of the world;
- (3) The increasing scarcity of labor suitable for cotton farms;
- (4) Speculation.

For the purpose of maintaining the present favorable conditions for the cotton farmer, there must be counteracting influences developed to protect the American cotton industry against these menaces.

#### THE BOLL WEEVIL.

The boll weevil is not the first pest which has brought discouragement to the cotton farmer. In the case of others a way has been found to practically destroy the pests before they have seriously injured the plant or diminished the crop. I have confidence that a way will be found to practically eliminate the ravages of the boll weevil. I appreciate that the Federal Government has done much service and valuable work, and that the report of its agents are not overly encouraging, yet in the past the magnitude of this menace has not been appreciated except by those where the boll weevil existed. It is only now that the people of the whole cotton area and through their influence, the government itself has just awakened to the importance of making more comprehensive efforts of bringing more varied talents to bear upon the question. I have no doubt that in due course of time a remedy will be found which will destroy this evil as has been done with other pests before.

#### COTTON IN AFRICA.

The production of cotton in America on a large scale has developed a market for cotton goods the world over, which makes a cotton supply to meet the requirements of this market, one of the most important elements in agriculture. The in-

creasing and pressing demands of this market while the crop has not been increased in America, has tremendously emphasized the importance to the European manufacturer of looking elsewhere to get the cotton necessary to meet the market requirements. There are many who think that nothing will come of the efforts of the various cotton-growing associations of Europe. They cite the fact that during the civil war the production from the rest of the world was not materially increased. During the civil war it was well known that as soon as the war was over the South would again promptly supply the world with good cotton at a cheap price. The stringency during the war was looked upon as a purely temporary condition. Aside from this, four years is not sufficient time to develop any great industry to any great extent. The present condition in the United States does not seem to promise any very great increase in the cotton crop, but it promises a continued high price. The tendency throughout the cotton-growing states is to increase manufacturing interests and not the production of cotton, at least the manufacturing interest is relatively increasing to a greater extent than the agriculture interest. The people who are interested in the cotton growing associations in Europe are men well accustomed to large enterprise and to the making of comprehensive plans for whatever they undertake. It is idle for us to rest in the present situation and to feel that the Europeans can accomplish nothing. It is exceedingly important if we would maintain our position in cotton production, we must give heed to each of the menaces which threatens to turn any part of the production which we have heretofore supplied, over to the people of other parts of the world. I am one who believes that the practical monopoly which we have had in the past can be continued if we will protect the conditions surrounding the production of cotton against menacing influences and if we bring about, in the place of the menaces, fostering influences.

#### SCARCITY OF LABOR.

The establishment and increase of manufacturing interests

in the South and the revival and increase of commerce, and of the transportation facilities necessary for commerce, have not only absorbed the actual increase of population in the South, but have drawn much labor from the cotton fields. Much of the labor which has lived on the farms now finds some profitable occupation in producing perishable food stuffs, cutting wood and in supplying fuel to that large population which has quit the farm and found profitable occupation in the factories, on the rail roads or in the commerce of the cotton growing states. Cotton is no less profitable than it ever was. On the contrary, its production is more profitable perhaps than ever before in its history, and yet these other profitable occupations are so attractive to a large proportion of the population that it has made cotton production stand practically still for ten years. The remedy for this deficiency lies in two directions:

- (1) In part we need white emigration to the cotton states.
- (2) In part we need more machinery specially adapted to do the farm operations connected with cotton farming with less labor.

We particularly need a cotton picking machine.

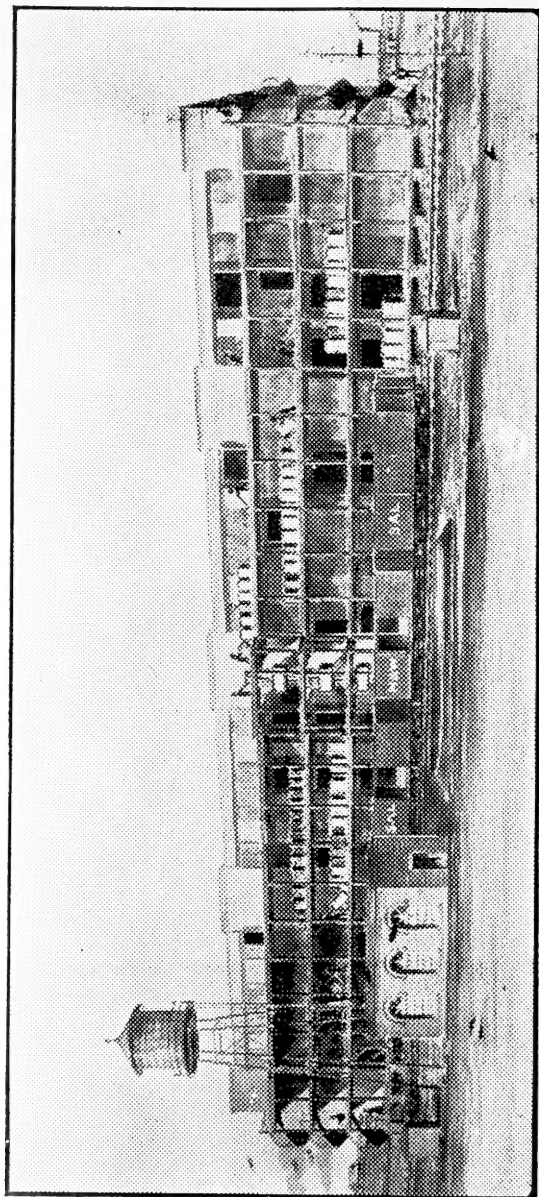
This is a difficult proposition, and yet in this present situation it would seem no more difficult than a sewing machine seemed before it was invented. In the abstract it is no more complex problem than that of harvesting, binding and otherwise handling wheat as is done by the modern machines. A number of people are already at work on a cotton picker. Three efforts are in some degree notable. Those of Mr. C. T. Mason of Sumter, S. C., who is said to have produced a machine that picked cotton at the rate of 2,000 lbs. per day. This was a machine drawn by a mule. The enterprise was abandoned for the reason that the promoters found it to be absorbing more money than they were willing to put out. While it picked a great quantity of cotton in one day, many of the parts were delicate and it easily got out of order. These difficulties would probably have been overcome by continued experiment and continued effort. The American Cotton Picker Company of Pittsburg, Pa., has had a machine



in process of development for several years. This company is giving attention to two main points—one is, to the production of a machine that will pick the cotton all right, and the second is, to the development of a variety of cotton which is specially adapted to be picked by machinery. The third effort is that of Mr. Theo. H. Price of New York, who has bought some patents on cotton picking machinery and is backing some experiments looking to the development of a machine. It now costs about one hundred million dollars a year to pick the cotton crop. The power used is particularly the power of the fingers. This is like it was with sewing when it had to be done by hand, the quantity of sewing which could be done in a day by a woman was multiplied many fold when she could use part of the strength of her body to do the work instead of her fingers, and it was immensely multiplied when it could be done by power. So with cotton picking, when a device is invented by which man power or mule power can be applied to picking cotton instead of finger power, the greatest deficiency of labor now existing will have been overcome. With a successful machine operated by mule power, the cost of picking cotton might be reduced from 100 millions of dollars per year to 10 millions dollars per year. Thus there is a premium of 75 or 80 million dollars a year for a successful cotton picker, even after making big allowances for repairs, cost of machinery and cost of labor necessary to handle the mule and the machine. If we can get a successful cotton picker and could turn one-quarter the European emigration now coming into the United States to the cotton states, we will have supplied all the deficiency of labor that there is—the greater part by the machine, and the remainder by the white European emigrant.

#### SPECULATION.

The cotton plant is one of the most delicate of the agricultural products. It is produced in a climate that varies enough to make the variation in cotton production range from 150 lbs. of lint cotton per acre to 225 lbs. of lint cotton per



PROPOSED PLAN FOR COTTON STORAGE WAREHOUSE.

acre. One frost might make this difference from one year to another, because of the extreme delicacy of the plant and of extreme variations in climatic conditions. We furnish to the world one year a crop which is overwhelmingly big and the next year a crop which is insufficient to supply the ordinary demands. This creates a condition in which the speculator holds high carnival in dealing in cotton. The legitimate merchant and the manufacturer are made to turn gambler whether they will or not and the ordinary course of trade is tremendously disturbed. The average production for 10 years if it could be maintained, would bring about an average price. Inasmuch as the climate forbids this, from one year to another it is important that the production shall be by some artificial means brought to more or less of an average and thereby the price would be brought to an approximate average. I believe that this might best be done by the development of a system of warehouses which did far more than shelter and care for the cotton. Existing warehouses simply issue a receipt for a bale of cotton. No effort is made to state what kind of cotton the receipt stands for, nor does the warehouse company assume any responsibility for the grade, weight, or anything else connected with the cotton. Insurance is higher than it ought to be. I believe that if a comprehensive warehouse company would engage the best graders to be had, and would issue a certificate in which every factor relating to the bale of cotton was accurately entered, and the warehouse company stand responsible for the description of the cotton as given in the receipt, that such a receipt could be traded in to better advantage than the bale of cotton itself. The purchaser of the receipt in Carolina, in England or in Germany would know more about the particular bale of cotton in question from the receipt in hand, than he would know about it if he saw the bale of cotton. Cotton being one of the very best collaterals on the market, such receipts standing for the cotton exactly, might be traded in in the financial institutions of the whole world. Thus it would be feasible to bring cotton within the reach of all the surplus money of the world and when there was a large

crop, the surplus would undoubtedly be carried over by financial institutions as investments until a small crop should bring the price to an average. It would save the forcing of the surplus on to the market and by proper construction of warehouses, proper protection against fire and building in proper units, the cost of carrying cotton could be very much reduced by reduction of insurance and by reduction of interest rate in consequence of the certificate being an accurate representation of the cotton itself and being as good for money in Providence or Liverpool as in the town in which the warehouse is located. I exhibit herewith the picture of a warehouse which I have designed to carry from 20 to 30 thousand bales of cotton according to weight and extent of compression. I exhibit also a receipt which not only stands for a bale of cotton, but gives the general classification, the grade, the length of the staple, the degree of tinge, the degree of softness, the degree of fineness, and all these points are given in accordance with the judgment and the skill of the best and most expert graders obtainable. Therefore the record written by the expert would make a certificate representing a bale of cotton stand for more to a purchaser than if an average unexpert purchaser could see the bale of cotton himself. This certificate would stand for more to a banker in Liverpool or in Bremen than the cotton would to the average man who was in the town where the cotton was located and he could see the cotton. It would, in addition to having the record of an expert's judgment on every feature of the particular bale of the cotton, also have the backing of a responsible company guaranteeing this record. Such a system of warehouses with such a receipt would tremendously simplify the purchase by a mill man of cotton in warehouse, no matter where located in the cotton growing district. The European spinner by the purchase of these certificates could become the owner of cotton in Memphis with absolute confidence that with a certificate in hand he knew more about the cotton than if he could see it in Memphis and with the further absolute confidence that the responsibility of the warehouse company insured his getting the cotton whenever he wanted it, and yet equally insured its safe keeping for him as

long as the owners of the certificate wanted him to do so. By making it feasible for a mill man to buy cotton from the owner in warehouse outside the territory, and by bringing cotton into shape where it could be held as an investment and the surplus carried over from one season to another as an investment, speculation would necessarily have a much narrower field of operations than now, and the cotton spinner would have an infinitely better situation in respect to buying cotton than he has now.











## ATLANTA WAREHOUSE NO. 1

ATLANTA, GA.

RECEIVED ON STORAGE FOR

(Cotton received wet is docked as the judgment of our weighers dictates.)

ed and payable

split more than

 $t_{j^*}$ 

President.

*Cristofolini.*

## EXPLANATIONS

CLASSIFICATION	AMERICAN STANDARD CLASSIFICATION		LENGTH OF STAPLE		NOTES
	GRADES		INCHES TO MILLIMETRES		
	No. grade	No. grade	Inches.	Millimetres	
1. Sea Island	1. Fair.	19. Good Middling Tinged	0.8	9.525	25.4001
2. Egyptian	2. Strict Middling Fair.	20. Strict Middling Tinged.	7-16	11.1125	28.3676
3. Rivers	3. Middling Fair.	21. Middling Tinged.	7-16	11.16	28.3676
4. Benders	4. Strict Good Middling.	22. Low Middling Tinged.	9-12	12.7	28.5731
5. Peders	5. Fully Good Middling.	23. Strict Good Ordinary Tinged.	9-16	14.2657	30.1656
6. Uplands	6. Good Middling.	24. Fully Middling Stained.			
	7. Strict Middling.	25. Fully Middling Stained.			
	8. Strict Middling.	26. Strict Low Middling Stained.			
	9. Middling.	27. Fully Low Middling Stained.			
	10. Middling.	28. Fully Low Middling Stained.			
	11. Strict Low Middling.	29. Low Middling Stained.	11-15	17.4625	31.5285
	12. Strict Low Middling.	30. Low Middling Stained.	3-4	19.05	34.9251
	13. Barely Low Middling.				
	14. Barely Low Middling.				
	15. Strict Good Ordinary.		13-16	20.675	36.3126
	16. Fully Good Ordinary.		7-8	22.225	38.1001
	17. Strict Good Middling Tinged.		15-1	23.8125	

**FINENESS OF STAPLE:**

Figure 1 represents the fineness of best Egyptian.

Figure 10 represents the coarsest American Uplands.

Figures 11-13 represent intermediate degrees of fineness.

**SOFTNESS OF STAPLE:**

Figure 19 represents softest staple.

Figure 30 represents hardest staple.

Figures 1-18 represent intermediate degrees of softness in proportion to figure 19.

WAREHOUSE CHARGES:

a less time.

Weighed by —

*Graded by -*

Checked by - -

Bale Number
Weight
Classification
Grade
Tinge
Length of Staple
Softness of Staple
Fineness of Staple
Bale Number
Weight
Classification
Grade
Tinge
Length of Staple
Softness of Staple
Fineness of Staple
Bale Number
Weight
Classification
Grade
Tinge
Length of Staple
Softness of Staple
Fineness of Staple









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